

## BUILDING PERMITS SURVEY DOCUMENTATION - MA PRINTOUTS

### Metropolitan Area (MA) Estimates for Permit Authorized Construction - Computer Printouts

#### Introduction

Beginning with Annual 1995 and January 1996 this file provides building permit statistics on new privately-owned residential construction. For the years 1980-1994 and the months from January 1988 through December 1995, this file provides building permit statistics on new residential and nonresidential construction; additions, alterations and conversions; and demolitions. These are provided for metropolitan areas as defined by the Office of Management and Budget. Since January 1998, including the 1997 annual, all metropolitan areas are sorted alphabetically by name. Prior to 1998 monthly and 1997 annual, it is sorted alphabetically by metropolitan statistical areas (MSAs) and consolidated metropolitan statistical areas (CMSAs), with primary metropolitan statistical areas (PMSAs) listed under their appropriate CMSA.

#### Tabulation Formats

A. The monthly tabulation provides:

1. Survey month,
2. Metropolitan area name and four-digit FIPS code of the MSA/CMSA and PMSA,
3. Two major sets of data for each type of construction (see "Description of Data Items"):
  - a. Estimates with Imputation - include reported data for respondents and imputed data for nonrespondents, and
  - b. Reported Only - includes only reported data for respondents,
4. Each major set of data (Estimates with Imputation and Reported Only) has two subsets:
  - a. Current month - data tabulated for only that survey period.
  - b. Year-to-Date - summed data from the beginning of the year through the current survey month, including late reports and corrections to prior months.

B. The annual tabulation provides:

1. Survey year
2. Metropolitan area name and four-digit FIPS code of the MSA/CMSA and PMSA
3. Two sets of data for each type of construction (see "Description of Data Items"):
  - a. Estimates with Imputation - include reported data for monthly and annual respondents and imputed data for monthly and annual nonrespondents.
  - b. Reported Only - includes only reported data for monthly and annual respondents.

#### Source of Data

Statistics on construction authorized by building permits are based upon reports submitted by local building permit officials in response to a mail survey. They are obtained using Form C-404, "Report of Building or Zoning Permits Issued and Local Public Construction." When a report is not received, missing residential data are either (1) obtained from the Survey of Use of Permits (SUP) or (2) imputed. All other missing data are imputed. The SUP is used to collect information on housing starts. Data from the SUP are available only for about 850 places for which Census Bureau interviewers list and sample the permits that authorized construction of new residential structures. For places not in the SUP, imputations are used. The imputations are based on the assumption that the ratio of current month authorizations to those of a year ago should be the same for both respondents and nonrespondents. When imputing annual statistics, the ratio is based on current year authorizations to those of a year ago.

#### Sample Design and Estimation Procedures

Monthly statistics are obtained by directly cumulating the data for the places in the metropolitan statistical areas that report monthly. All permit-issuing places in the 26 largest MSAs (based on 1993 annual data) and in the 18 CMSAs are canvassed monthly. All places in the remaining areas may or may not be canvassed each month.

Annual statistics are obtained by cumulating data for all the places in the metropolitan statistical areas, both the monthly and annual reporters.

#### Reliability of the Data

Although these statistics are not subject to sampling variability, they are subject to various response and operational errors which can be attributed to many sources: inability to obtain information about all cases, differences in interpretation of questions, inability or unwillingness

by respondents to provide correct information, and errors made in processing the data. Explicit measures of the effects of these errors are not available. However, most of the important operational errors were detected and corrected in the course of the bureau's review of the data for reasonableness and consistency.

### Geographic Coverage of Building Permit Jurisdictions

Most of the permit-issuing jurisdictions are municipalities; the remainder are counties, townships, or unincorporated towns. For the municipalities, and townships or towns, the area subject to building permit requirements to which the figures pertain is normally that of the governmental jurisdictions. A small number of municipalities have authority to issue building or zoning permits for areas extending beyond their corporate limits. In such cases, the data relate to the entire area within which the permit-issuing authority is exercised. Similarly, a small number of townships issue permits for only a part of the township and the data normally cover only the area subject to the township's permit system.

### Limitations of Data

The portion of construction measurable from building permit records is inherently limited since such records obviously do not reflect construction activity outside of areas subject to local permit requirements. For the nation as a whole, less than 5 percent of all privately owned housing units built are constructed in areas that do not require building permits.

The reported statistics are also influenced by the following factors:

1. Some building permit jurisdictions close their books a few days before the end of the month/year, so that the time reference for permits is not, in all cases, strictly the calendar month/year.
2. A study spanning 4 years showed that about 3 percent of the single-family houses built in permit-issuing places are built without a permit.

To the extent that most of these limiting factors apply rather consistently over an extended period, they may not seriously impair the usefulness of building permit statistics as prompt indicators of trends in residential construction activity.

Questions should be directed to Manufacturing and Construction Division, U.S. Census Bureau, Washington, D.C. 20233-6900. Phone: (301) 457-1321.